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DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: July 02, 2007

Fischer on Eurofighter Deal

11. Speaking on Austrian television on Sunday, President Heinz Fischer described the reduction achieved by Defense Minister Norbert Darabos from 18 to 15 Eurofighter jets for Austria's armed forces as a "positive result." The President also argued that a complete cancellation of the contract with EADS and the process of purchasing different jets would not have been a good solution. In addition, Fischer urged the coalition partners SPOe and OeVP to stop their "war of words" and improve cooperation.

Speaking on ORF TV's Sunday morning program Meet the Press on July 1, Austrian President Heinz Fischer criticized the coalition partners SPOe and OeVP, stressing he is hoping for a "better performance" from the two major parties in the future. While the government's accomplishments up to now are "quite notable," he expects "a more future-oriented synthesis with less verbal jostling," Fischer stressed. The formation of a grand coalition was the "logical and sensible consequence of the general election," the President added, and harshly criticized the "tone" and at times "extreme choice of words" between the government partners. Fischer dismissed the idea of early general elections, and underscored that all members of a coalition government are "required to focus on what unites and not what divides them," which is why he is urging the SPOe and the OeVP to "commit themselves to finding a more constructive way of cooperating and solving key problems."

SPOe and OeVP Pledge Cooperation

12. Speaking on Austrian television on Sunday night, the floor leaders of the SPOe, Josef Cap, and of the OeVP, Wolfgang Schuessel, conceded that the "style" of the government coalition's work was not good. There was "definitely room for improvement" regarding the two parties' cooperation, Schuessel agreed, and Cap added that conflicts of interests should be addressed in a "more cultivated" manner. Appearing on ORF television's Sunday night discussion panel Im Zentrum, the floor leaders of Austria's coalition government partners, Josef Cap of the Social Democrats and Wolfgang Schuessel of the People's Party pledged to improve their parties' cooperation. The coalition government's style definitely had to improve, Schuessel admitted, and tried to dispel allegations he was trying to break up the government. Quite the contrary: Had he really been opposed to the Conservatives' government cooperation with the Social Democrats, he would have found dozens of arguments against the formation of the coalition, Schuessel underscored, adding that in truth he was not the government's "demolition man," but its "master builder." Cap, in turn, proposed to try solving conflicts of

interests between the two parties in a more cultivated way in the future. Despite their show of goodwill, the two floor leaders "failed to set a good example" in the discussion, and kept criticizing their respective coalition partners, ORF online news noted.

Portugal Takes Over EU Presidency

¶3. Portugal has taken over the rotating European Union presidency from Germany, which held the presidency since the beginning of the year. Incoming EU Council President, Portugal's Prime Minister Jos Socrates, presented what Austrian media have described as an "ambitious program." He said the focus of his presidency will be on economic reform; progress and details regarding the reform of the EU treaty; Europe's role in the world, particularly with regard to Africa and Brazil; as well as on keeping talks on Turkey's possible accession on track.

Britain Remains on Maximum Alert

¶4. Britain remains on maximum security alert as police are continuing their hunt for people suspected of involvement in the attempted car bombings in London's West End on Friday and an attack at Glasgow Airport's main terminal on Saturday. Five people have been arrested over the weekend, but police have indicated that at least one other suspect remains at large. The bombings in London and Glasgow appear to be linked, British terrorism experts say. Prime Minister Gordon Brown has suggested that apparently Britain is dealing with people associated with the terrorist group al Qaeda. All Austrian media continue to report on developments following the attempted car bombings in London's West End on Friday and an attack at Glasgow Airport's main terminal on Saturday. Independent provincial daily Salzburger Nachrichten quotes British Premier Gordon Brown's terrorism advisor Lord Stevens as saying the attacks were "a new form of terrorism. For the first time, al Qaeda had exported to the West the terrorism tactics they employed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and had used techniques to build their bombs similar to those common among al Qaeda in Baghdad or Bali, Lord Stevens said. Circumstances indicate that British-born al Qaeda terrorists had returned from Iraq and Afghanistan in order to instruct and train British terrorist groups, the advisor warned. Liberal daily Der Standard meanwhile quotes Premier Brown as trying to prepare Britons for potential future attacks: "We are facing a long-term threat that will not go away in the next weeks or months," Brown said. The daily also quotes Austrian President Heinz Fischer, who underscored that "observant publics and police as well as stable societies might provide an effective tool against terrorism." The terrorists "must not be allowed the triumph of forcing a country away with threats from observing its fundamental rights and freedoms," Fischer added.

Bush and Putin Meet in Maine

¶5. US President George Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin are meeting informally at the Bush family holiday home in Kennebunkport, Maine. Ties have been strained between the two countries, particularly over US plans to set up parts of a missile defense system in eastern European countries, and over Russia's opposition to independence for the Kosovo province. The talks are aimed at easing tensions, and are also expected to focus on international security in the wake of recent developments in London and Glasgow, and on concern over Iran's nuclear ambitions. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told journalists yesterday that the two leaders "reached a number of agreements." Independent provincial daily Salzburger Nachrichten, reporting like all major Austrian media on the visit to the Bush family holiday home in Maine of Russian President Vladimir Putin, says that observers do not believe the meeting of the two leaders will yield any substantial results, as Russia and the US are divided on too many key issues. The "lobster summit," as the daily has termed the meeting, is to improve the tone between the two major world powers, however. Likewise, in an analysis, liberal daily Der Standard suggests that it would be "wrong to expect more than damage control" from the meeting in Kennebunkport. The fact that the two presidents get along reasonably well cannot gloss over the problem that the

relations between their countries have suffered and their peoples have not warmed to each other, the Standard argues. Quite revealing in this context is the fact that the Russian-US economic ties have not expanded, the daily says and adds that it will be up to the next American President to really tackle the United States' relations with Russia.

Kilner